

REPORT OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE
September 2, 1972

On Thursday, August 31, 1972, following the completion of the formal agenda of the Central Committee of the Motor City Labor League, Jack Russell initiated a discussion around the question of organizational tensions and power. Sheila Murphy, a member of the Central Committee, had left the meeting prior to completion of the formal agenda and was not present.

During the discussion some criticisms were made of Sheila Murphy and the bloc which at the preceding General Membership meeting she had admitted existed under her leadership. The question of whether her bloc could accept the results of the election in which three members of her bloc, including Brian Flanigan, were defeated, was raised. Frank Joyce expressed the formulation that the organization was being "punished" for the defeat of Brian Flanigan. The view was also expressed that the bloc in general did not encourage internal struggle in the organization, the raisings of disagreements, etc. Jack Russell took exception to that view and held that it was possible to struggle and that people should do so. He also agreed that although unhappy with the role, for reasons of being clearly identified with neither the Murphy bloc nor the "Joyce-Snook" bloc, he was thrust into a role as go-between and intermediary. He said that he would raise the matters that had been discussed with Sheila.

At a point more than midway through the discussion, Sheila Murphy called for Valerie at whose apartment this meeting was taking place. She asked if the meeting were still going on. Valerie said no. Sheila then asked who was there. Valerie replied that Jack was. Jack then spoke with Sheila - whether indicating that the discussion was continuing we do not know. Valerie was criticised by Jack and Frank for having been incorrect and liberal for not having told Sheila that the discussion was continuing. The discussion then continued for approximately another 45 minutes to an hour.

Subsequently, under various circumstances, Sheila spoke with Frank and Buck, prior to being spoken to by Jack as agreed, without either Frank or Buck mentioning the substance or fact of the afternoon's discussion. Following a conversation with Jack, Sheila called Valerie and suggested that apparently there were some problems and that although she was unsure she thought that a meeting of the Central Committee was the appropriate channel for dealing with them.

Late Friday morning, Frank reached Sheila to suggest that the central committee meet at 10 a. m. Saturday morning. He also asked Sheila for a private meeting prior to Saturday morning to which she agreed.

At the Saturday Central Committee meeting three or more hours of discussion took place, which centered around the substance of democratic centralism in the organization, the nature of Sheila's reaction to the election, the methods and difficulty of internal struggle in MCLL. It was held by Jack and Sheila that anyone's inability to struggle with Sheila, was their problem and not Sheila's. Sheila characterized the points raised at various times as insane, paranoid, bizarre and flimsy and of far lower quality than those raised by members of her own bloc among other things. Following a stalemate on the substantive issue, the matter of how the discussion had originated and the fact of the telephone call by Sheila, answered by Valerie, was raised. Sheila took the position that Valerie's behavior was unprincipled and uncomradely. Valerie admitted that it was incorrect and liberal. Sheila indicated that she felt that Valerie should resign.

Valerie declined to do so and characterized the relationship that had obtained between she and Sheila as having been uncomradely for some time. Neither offered any definition of uncomradely behavior. Frank then indicated that if Sheila wished to pursue the matter that the proper procedure seemed to be to raise in the General Staff, the issue of whether Valerie's behavior was unprincipled and uncomradely and if so whether it was sufficient grounds for expulsion from the Central Committee.

Buck and Linda Ann agreed that this was the proper procedure and further took the view along with Frank and Valerie that however the action(s) were characterized, they were not sufficient grounds for expulsion. Jack indicated a desire to discuss the matter. Sheila said that the discussion was already tedious. Frank agreed. Sheila then said she could not be a member of the same leadership body as Valerie and resigned. Jack followed suit.

The remaining members of the Central Committee take the position that the method of struggle engaged in in this matter was completely typical and representative of precisely the criticism which had been made earlier in the meeting and in the Thursday discussion.

It is typical to characterize most criticism as baseless and, or unprincipled and, or as having been improperly raised and, or as having impugned the integrity of the person being criticized or disagreed with. We believe that to resign rather than take the issue properly before the appropriated body is characteristic of a "taking the marbles and going home attitude" which discourages the very struggle and criticism to which leadership in particular must be most open.

We believe that the Motor City Labor League has much to learn about disagreement, criticism, self-criticism, internal struggle, party building and democratic centralism. We are inexperienced. We make many mistakes. We improve. We must,

concentrated exclusively on minor faults, and everyone will become timid and overcautious and forget the Party's political tasks."

(Pg 263).

We find the organization to be a thing as though crippled, rather than strengthened since the Central Committee elections. Not only is there a work crisis in the organization, but unpolitical conflict and hostility seems to have multiplied. Blocs are admitted to exist for no political basis other than "shared practice" which presumably we all have. The election process and results, while admittedly primitive and underdeveloped have been delegitimized through a subtle program of sniping, involving implications that blocs existed which did not and that some didn't which should or whatever. Who knows. We do know that the expectations about what is "political" and comradely behavior seem at best unclear and at worst show contempt, departmentalism and commandism. There is no member of the organization with whom we have talked who does not feel that they have been disrespected and consequently indeed, intimidated by the very people whom until recently they - and indeed we - respected most.

We do not believe that there are fundamental political disagreements within the Motor City Labor League except possibly around matters of internal struggle and methods of party building. We not only accept the results of the Central Committee elections, we respect them even though we disagree with them. Not one of us

voted for every person who is a member. We can only interpret the readiness to resign by Jack and Sheila as proof of our original assertion that the election was being sabotaged and that people were unwilling and unable to accept the results.

Even though one of our comrade's political integrity has been explicitly impugned, we continue to accept Jack and Sheila as political comrades with whom we wish to continue struggle. We believe that both of them, along with us, have contributed enormously to the development of the organization to its present unparalleled power and practice. We believe that every part of the organization including the Alliance, the Ravitz Campaign, contributes and will continue to contribute to the common interest of organizing and leading our class to victory. We recognize many problems of uneven development and unequal work within the organization. The real power of MCLL is expanding as the result of the work of all sectors of the organization. The internal power and leadership of the organization should reflect that reality.

We believe there is much more to be gained by remaining intact than by splitting. However, we also believe that the leadership of the organization should be shared and the membership's wishes respected even if comrades are simultaneously struggled against as liberal, non-struggle and under-developed as indeed, recent events have shown our own to be.

We are fully prepared to accept if necessary, that the divisions around methods of internal work are so severe that a split is necessary. We would all be the losers - not least of which those with whom we would have unsuccessfully and perhaps incorrectly or hesitantly struggled around these questions. We respect ourselves and our political work and are prepared to carry on with the many programs and organizations which we have initiated or to which we have made contributions.

"We have the Marxist-Leninist weapon of criticism and self-criticism. We can get rid of a bad style and keep the good." *ibid.*, p259.

Should a split occur we will not only survive, we will prosper. In merely contemplating the possibility with the membership, we have grown more in one day than in any preceding period.

We believe that the organization can, admittedly with difficulty, stay together. We respect the talent, skill, leadership, experience, insight, power and commitment of Sheila, and her closest political allies. We re-affirm that it should and that it is in the best interests of the working class in Detroit and the nation that it do so. We believe it would best serve the purposes of achieving a new level of struggle and unity if the General Staff were to accept the resignation of Jack and Sheila,

which we assume will be tendered, that a full discussion within the membership of these events take place on Sunday, Sept. 2, and that the General Staff, on Sept. 10, fill the two vacancies on the Central Committee.